

M

THE
SICK LAUREAT, &c.

A
P O E M

[Price Two Shillings.]

Entered at Stationers Hall.



THE
SICK LAUREAT,

OR

PARNASSUS IN CONFUSION:

A

P O E M.

IN WHICH THE MERITS AND DEFECTS OF SOME OF OUR PRINCIPAL
MODERN POETS ARE EXAMINED AND ASCERTAINED.

—RIDENTEM DICERE VERUM
QUID VETAT?

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR G. KEARSLEY, at No. 46, in FLEET-STREET.

M.DCC.LXXXIX.



THE
SICK LAUREAT, &c.

A
P O E M.

THE Laureat ficken'd, not with song or fighting,
For all men know his happy knack at writing ;
And as to War, it may be truly said,
He'd crack your sides before he'd break your head.
The Laureat ficken'd—tho' so lately frisking,
Seiz'd with a surfeit of his fav'rite grifkin ;
Quick o'er the town the tidings soon were spread,
Warton is sick, nay some pronounc'd him dead.

B

The

The hundred pounds a year, and butt of sack,
 Drew in full cry the yelping, scribbling pack ;
 To * Salisbury's villa one and all repair—
 " Bedlam's broke loose," the Hatfield people swear ;
 The sleeping peer, awaken'd by their call,
 Appoints a hearing in his Gothic hall.
 Eager as virgins for the nuptial ring,
 Or Peter Pindar to abuse the King :
 On either side the marshal'd poets wait,
 While in an elbow chair great Sarum fat.
 But ere the court commenc'd a change was made,
 A not unneedful change in Salisbury's head ;
 For court precedence and for etiquette,
 A change of mourning, and a birth-night feat ;

* Lord Chamberlain, who has a mansion-house at Hatfield.



Precision nice in swords, and coats and bags,
 A lord's blue ribbon, or a footman's tags,
 For all those bagatelles which courtiers say
 Must grace the man who wears the golden key.
 Poetic knowledge, criticism sublime,
 To judge of metre, and decide on rhyme,
 To weigh in scale exact each poet's merit,
 Which few improve, and fewer still inherit :
 Such the rare gifts bestow'd upon him now ;
 Soon as the court breaks up, his sapient brow
 Sinks to court chat, the nod, and ready bow.

Thus have I seen, Oh were he still but living,
 To make us laugh, at which such fools are striving !
 Thus have I seen King David, King of Actors,
 Who ruled at Drury Goddesses and Hectors,

Give empires, crowns, and provinces away,
 And pour out bounty as he pour'd out tea ;
 The curtain dropp'd, at home we all agreed,
He was a little manager indeed.

Silence proclaim'd, a modern bard drew nigh,
 Fam'd for smooth verse, and gentle melody ;
 From him good temper learnt the precept mild,
 Freedom and sense own'd Hayley for their child,
 While fair Serena in his numbers shone,
 "Pride of our sex, and envy of her own."
 In words like these he thus address'd the peer :
 "My Lord, afford your bard a patient ear,
 "Be mine the task, great Cecil's lineal heir,
 "The annual ode in future to prepare,

"The

- “ The sugar’d treat in my harmonious verse
 “ Shall sooth the rough, and soften the perverse ;
 “ For who like me a royal ear can charm,
 “ Or the fierce frown of critic rage disarm ?
 “ I gave a rap to Gibbon’s learned knuckles,
 “ Who modern infidels profanely suckles ;
 “ And lest th’ historic fist too long shou’d smart,
 “ I hasten’d quick with flattery’s healing art.
 “ When well-fed Cadell gives the learned treat,
 “ I scold with Mason, and with Gibbon eat ;
 “ And when *our fav’rite toast* has first gone round,
 “ A fourth edition makes the room resound.
 “ To modern painters I instructions give ;
 “ Though dead on canvass, they through me shall live.

“ E’en ancient virgins, long unus’d to smile,

“ Have found my pen their thorny hours beguile,

“ And buskin’d heroes, in these acting times,

“ Repique in verse, spout my bon mots in rhymes.”

The poet ceas’d, and thus the peer replied,

Whilst Truth and Candour both were on his side :

“ The polish’d period, the smooth flowing line,

“ And faultless texture, all must own are thine ;

“ For this thy rank thou shalt unenvied keep,

“ While all must praise, but while they praise they sleep.

“ No fire of genius through thy verses burns,

“ Languor and sweetness take their place by turns.

“ No vig’rous lightning flashes through thy page,

“ To melt with pity, or inflame with rage :

“ Select

"Select in phrase, in ripen'd judgment cool,

"Deep hast thou studied the Italian school :

"Tho' great thy fame, in rank poetic high,

"Still Dante and Ariosto strike the eye.

"Correctly cold, your wishes here are vain ;

"To Eartham's pleasant shades return again."

From that fam'd temple, not of God but Law,

Where sages find, or help to make a flaw,

Where with nice nuts themselves attornies treat,

While hungry clients only shells must eat ;

Where filken templars smoke the dusty cit,

And Blackstone leave for Sheridan and wit :

A poet

A poet rush'd, possess'd of well-earn'd fame,

And Diaboliad was his Muse's name :

Thrice he essay'd a copious speech to pour,

And thrice his tongue deny'd its wonted pow'r :

When thus the chamberlain address'd the bard ;

“ Just is thy claim to laurel and reward ;

“ Through thy rich page in measure strong and terse

“ Majestic flows the deep sonorous verse ;

“ A fervid glow inspirits ev'ry tone,

“ And Satan speaks in language all his own :

“ Great Milton's plan hast thou improv'd, and made

“ Th' infernal monarch sicken in his shade :

“ In him * ambition sooths his pains ; but thou

“ Hast pluckt this last relief from Sorrow's brow.

“Thou much improv’st his moral, by *thy* art ;

“Th’ Almighty’s bolts still rankle in his heart :

“But here in vain is such a good report,

“For pers’nal satire will not do at court.”

Post-haste from York the learned Mason came,
 Ereft with Druid lore, and fair Elfrida’s fame ;
 The English garden cull’d him many a flower,
 Yet all prov’d vain—his angry eyebrows lower ;
 Petty contention, and provincial strife,
 Bestrew’d with thorns his private path of life :
 Loaded with books he fallied from his home,
 Whitehead and Gray in many a heavy tome ;

Works which produc'd him many a heart-felt groan,

Nor add to their fame, or increase his own:

The coward stroke on Johnson now he's dead

(For when alive the wasp scarce show'd its head)

Was poor and mean——

Soon as the peer beheld the poet's frown,

His hair dishevell'd, and his rusty gown,

Full low he bow'd with all his native grace,

While smiles and simpers swell'd his little face;

Such smiles as courtiers readily supply,

To sooth those wretches whom they must deny.

“ My good precentor, much it grieves my heart

“ That hence unfatisfy'd you must depart;

" 'Tis not of laurels and of sack *you* dream ;

" Mitres and croziers are the churchman's theme.

" High on Parnassus grows the sacred tree

" Deny'd to many, and deny'd to thee :

" Write some strange book the chancellor to please,

" And an archbishop you may be with ease.

" Demolish Lindsay, Priestley, and those elves,

" Who dare to think and study for themselves :

" Such the rewards polemic war affords,

" Lawn sleeves, a palace, and to vote with lords ;

" To rash opponents comfortless the cheer,

" Praise, common-sense, and fifty pounds a year."

Next

Next Sheridan petition'd to be heard ;
 By princes honour'd, by the great rever'd ;
 To him the comic Muse wou'd quickly pour
 In unexhausted wealth her ev'ry store ;
 But he, like favour'd lovers, ceas'd to prize
 Those gifts so much esteem'd in others eyes ;
 The statesman's flipp'ry path he lov'd to tread,
 Still proud to follow where his Fox wou'd lead ;
 The peevish tongue of Prudence gall'd him sore,
 And taunts for wild expence he patient bore ;
 Whilst Hope breath'd forth these fascinating sounds,
 " Friendship and honour soon shall heal his wounds ;
 " The voice of nuptial Love reforms his plan,
 " And moderation guides the future man : "

Ere

Ere he began, with warm ambition fir'd,

Th' IMPEACHMENT interven'd, and he retir'd.

Then next was introduc'd a man of fun ;

Divinity and Phyfic call'd him son :

A graceless son, whose whim and frolic wild

Made them asham'd to own their truant child ;

Or rather, as some think, he blush'd to own

He e'er had felt a pulse, or worn a gown :

Rough from his pen satiric stanza glides,

And fat and humour quiver'd on his sides ;

A poet * and apostle form'd his name,

But real genius led his way to fame.

* Peter and Pindar.

Soon as the laughter he produc'd had ceas'd,

In words like these great Sal'fb'ry he addrest :

“ What-tho' your looks, my frowning Lord, display

“ Ill-favour'd omens on my suit to-day,

“ Still let me ask, and you shall then retort,

“ Must Flatt'ry's voice alone be heard at court ;

“ At court where truth such useful hints might give,

“ And teach great monarchs how they ought to live ?

“ If fools in *private only* must be sketch'd,

“ And regal meanness ought not to be etch'd,

“ By the same rule the engineer might prize

“ Cannon for wrens, and culverins for flies.

“ Jury

" Jury and judge make little men to groan ;

" What power can punish folly on a throne ?

" The pen of satire, and 'tis that alone."

Struck with these truths, these pond'rous truths that fell

From Peter's tongue, the peer began to swell

With rage ; but quick St. James's well-taught guile

Threw o'er his phiz the hollow artful smile ;

And thus he spoke—" No tongue can thee deny

" True Attic wit, farcastic keen reply :

" Thee as their own the sons of Momus claim ;

" In rank poetic worthy Pindar's name.

" Few are the faults in thee I'll be revealing,

" Tho' jokes and stories old you're sometimes stealing.

I

" Whether

- “ Whether in angry or ironic verse
 “ The faults of kings or pedants you rehearse ;
 “ Whether a widow shows her rage in walls,
 “ Or *feeble connoisseurs* adorn your scrawls ;
 “ Still we must laugh at learned dirty slovens
 “ Who eat raw flesh, or bake themselves in ovens ;
 “ Still, still thy lines increase the Muse’s treasure,
 “ And yet you often limp in shocking measure ;
 “ The clinking line recurs at distance sad,
 “ That ’tis ‘ not poetry, but prose run mad.’
 “ If an opinion you will let me give,
 “ You shine the most in hum’rous narrative :
 “ The coarse allusion, oft repeated jest,
 “ Tho’ cloth’d in rhyme, will lose at last their zest ;

“ Yet

" Yet the same rank which Hogarth's pencil gave

" With painters, thou in poetry shalt have.

" But here in vain you make your strong appeal ;

" The royal wound you made you cannot heal ;

" Yet sure 'twas cruel in the worst of foes

" To point a couplet with a nation's woes.*

" Haste to yon dome where sumptuous pillars rise ;

" The gate of Carleton open to thee flies :

" The rage of kings may safely there be brav'd ;

" The path with flatt'ry you've already pav'd ;

" Smoothly your lines the prince's ears divert ;

" Blisters to us, to him a sweet desert :

* Alluding to a cruel but well-written epigram produced by the wicked wit.

" But let the prince beware ; who made *us* smart

" May wound *him* sorely in a *tender part*.

" A *king's* to thee a *subject* of much worth ;

" Who cuts up George the Third, may George the Fourth.

" The royal beast who wanders through the wood, -

" Hunts not small trifling prey to find him food."

Peter withdrew without one *soft* reply,

But gave him all the *vengeance of his eye* * ;

Resolv'd to make him, in some future song,

" Sacred to ridicule his whole life long."

* Whoever knows the bard cannot but recollect the energy of his looks when animated by the impulse of anger, or the phrenzy of poetry.

A well-

A well-dress'd peer next caper'd through the hall,

While "clear the way" the liv'ried menials bawl;

A viceroy's sceptre once he try'd to wield,

But Pitt and Temple drove him from the field.

Some meagre couplets his *fair band* display'd,

Which while at Eaton the *sweet fellow* made :

Elate with native pride, he had prepar'd

A fluid speech, doom'd never to be heard ;

For while his curious chitterling he view'd,

The crowd insult with interruption rude :

"No red-heel'd coxcomb shall possess the place,

"Whose only wish is clothes, and scent, and lace ;

"He less loves verse than his own charming face."

}

The PEOPLE'S MAN came next, in dress derang'd ;
 From what he once appear'd how sadly chang'd !
 For he was once the prince of macaronies,
 And blaz'd o'er Europe a first-rate Adonis ;
 For sword-knot, buckles, curls, and pinch of snuff,
 Now Bett and politics, and blue and buff :
 He verse compos'd in youthful genius high
 When his pulse beat at * * * * *y's wanton eye ;
 Eyes which could once a royal breast inspire,
 Spite of morality, with soft desire.
 When (tho' she once so loosely sallied forth),
 When to Sir C—— she pledg'd her maiden troth,

Her

Her am'rous cousin mourn'd her in the shade ;

With tears and sighs a shadow almost made ;

“ * For the wishes of years in a moment repaid.

“ When his heart would have strove ev'ry pang to remove,

“ And have pluck'd ev'ry thorn from the roses of love.”

He stamp'd his right foot †, wishing to be heard,

When strait the prince's messenger appear'd :

At sight of him the patriot retir'd,

By many hated, but by all admir'd.

Next DERBY came, inspir'd by Farren's smile,

Enough to tempt an anchorite to guile.

* The three lines beginning from the asterisk, though differing in measure from this poem, are extracted from the charming composition of Mr. Fox.

† His constant method of speaking in the House.

Who can behold her act the comic part,
 Nor find the rush of rapture in his heart ?
 At such a shrine the proudest mortal kneels,
 And fierce desire an humble poet feels ;
 Around her eyes the wish luxuriant roves ;
 Her breast the snow-white throne of all the Loves ;
 While fame unsullied ev'ry charm improves.
 Unhappy peer ! whom Hymen's chains debar
 From meeting such a maid in am'rous war :
 For bliss like that the laurel I'd resign,
 And quit the Muses were but Farren mine.
 Unhappy peer ! still doom'd to drudge through life,
 With love unfated, and a sickly wife.

Thus WILLIAM PITT, who, when but twenty-three,

Had *tax'd* our windows, but had *cheapen'd* tea *;

Who courts applause his lonely hours to cheer,

Is plagu'd with RICHMOND, the great engineer;

Spite of his frowns, old Gunpowder adheres,

Close as elastic peruke on the ears.

ENCUMBER'D WILLIAM wishes him at hell;

Longing, like DERBY, for a last farewell:

Thus ev'ry mortal thinks his lot a hard one;

Pitt has his LENOX, THURLOW, PEPPER ARDEN.

Derby dismiss'd, Pratt next advanc'd to speak;

Once Courtney Melmoth ('twas a childish freak).

* Witness the sales at the India-House.

With:

With honey'd flattery, his long practis'd trade,

His soft attack upon the peer he made:

"Illustrious son of an *illustrious* sire,

"Whom poets worship, and whom all admire;

"In ev'ry feature of thy godlike face

"Shines Attic wit, true judgment, sense, and grace.

"Thy *lovely* wife, just in her *youthful* prime,

"Calls in no *art* to hide the *chinks* of *time*;

"No *art* she wants, in *maiden* transports wild;

"She's just between the *woman* and the *child*.

"Oh thou art all"—"Arrest thy cloying treat,"

The peer reply'd; "the dose is much too sweet.

"'Tis true we love the soothing voice of praise,

"When well wrapp'd up in smooth and artful lays:

"But

“ But praise like thine is quite another matter ;

“ So undeserv'd, 'tis the severest satire :

“ With hand unskilful to the work you rush,

“ And daubing trowel, not a fine-hair'd brush.

“ Mere lamb, or veal, or beef, disgust the glutton,

“ Ragou'd he'd swallow ram for Banstead mutton :

“ With raptures swallow, like a sharp-set wit,

“ Of what, plain dress'd, he had not touch'd a bit.

“ And pleasant Warren when he gives a pill,

“ A gilded coat he orders o'er it still ;

“ However good the purpose it perform,

“ It must be given in a proper form ;

“ Or the sick stomach nauseating throws

“ Full in the doctor's face the mawkish dose :

H

“ And

" And yet of merit small is not thy share ;

" In Freedom's cause you wage the generous war :

" Thy well-tun'd verse in easy gentle strains

" Lulls the poor captive in his galling chains.

" The negro sees the cruel overseer

" Soften each look, unbend his brow severe ;

" And planters now their real int'rest see,

" Giving an ear to pity and to thee.

" Thy landscapes too peculiar merit have ;

" Where Fancy gilds the scenes which Nature gave :

" But recollect (nor let it be effac'd),

" Descriptive poetry fatigues at last,

" When neither narrative or facts are trac'd :

" But

- " But *novels* are your forte ; you there succeed ;
- " And Emma Corbett is a work indeed ;
- " A work your future fame which firmly seals,
- " While ev'ry eye the soft suffusion feels.
- " Pleasure's warm pupil who for Stanhope rages,
- " (While knowledge of the heart pervades your pages)
- " Tho' meant against Lord Chesterfield to tell,
- " Splits on the self-fame rock—you *paint so well*.*
- " Even religion—touch not that again,
- " Tho' meaning well, you hurt it with your pen ;
- " And, like Soame Jennings, failing in your end,
- " Injure the cause you essay'd to defend."

* One of the scenes with the wife of Horace Homespun is drawn with all the irritating fire of Pope's Eloisa, and all the voluptuous danger of the W—n of P——e.

Such motley words, such censure, mix'd with praise,
 Fill'd thoughtful Pratt with anger and amaze :
 He then retir'd with an indignant sigh,
 To seek his Muse's sweet SOCIETY*.

“ Then came a feeble but a desp'rate pack,
 “ With many a filly brother at their back ;”
 With clam'rous tongue, keen eye, and fallow face ;
 Their Muse a drab, their wit all common-place ;
 Who monthly fill our loaded magazines
 With Cheapside past'ral, Wapping's rural scenes :
 When through the crowd recover'd Warton prest,
 Who from the common-room had heard the jest ;

* A poem of this name which Mr. Pratt is preparing, and of which two favourable specimens have appeared.

Tho'

Tho' short of time, a little he must spare

From the fatigues of his professor's chair.

Soon as the PEER beheld the Laureat come,

He sent each disappointed poet home ;

The court broke up—the peer and Oxford sinner

Directly went and sat them down to dinner.

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— *Refer ante suis, et conde sepulchro.* Virgil.

— *Mors sola fatetur*

Quantula sint hominum corpuscula. Juvenal.

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